

THE CHRONICLE AND DIRECTORY

FOR 1877.

Which will be incorporated
"THE CHRONICLE AND DIRECTORY."

THIS Work, now in the FOURTEENTH YEAR of its existence, will be published as early as practicable after the close of the current year.

It will be compiled and printed at the Daily Press Office, as usual, from the best and most authentic sources, and no pains will be spared to make the work complete in all respects.

The CHRONICLE and DIRECTORY will now be the only publication of its kind for China and Japan.

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Hongkong, 25th December, 1876.

The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, DECEMBER 29th, 1876.

Another illustration of the peculiar condition of Chinese provincial finances is afforded by a memorial of the Governor-General of Szechuen published in the *Peking Gazette* of the 4th instant. This official represents that the regular revenue has in past years habitually fallen short of the estimated provincial freights, and that, in spite of recourse having been had to the sale of titles and the levy of a tax, there will still be a deficiency this year of upwards of a million taels.

He could think of no other expedient but a forced contribution from the wealthier inhabitants, which he accordingly recommended to the Imperial Government, and obtained an Imperial decree to that effect. Considering that both the spring and autumn harvest were abundant this year, that the province is therefore in a fairly prosperous condition, and that the country is at present at peace, abroad, and has nearly stamped out all rebellion at home, it is at first rather surprising that such a complaint should be made, and resort be recommended to a method of obtaining money only used when all other means have been exhausted. It is not possible to arrive at any estimate of the expenditure of the province of Szechuen, but we can therefore only deal with the figures given in the memorial.

A study of these shows that the extra liabilities are such as leave no room for wonder that the Governor-General feels himself in an embarrassed condition. In addition to the military expenditures of the province, there are upwards of 1,500,000 taels, there are upwards of 700,000 taels called for in the shape of subsidies for Peking, for the drilled troops in China, public works, Imperial manufactures, &c. Another demand, under the same head, has been made for subsidies on behalf of coast defence in Chihli, the Yellow River works in Shantung, advances for copper mining in Yunnan, the pay of troops maintained on the frontier, and other special military forces, amounting in all to nearly 900,000 taels. But over this does not include all the requirements made on this unfortunate province. Over and above the items enumerated, there are military subsidies ordered on behalf of Yunnan and Kweichow, monthly payments to the military chiefs of two generals in Szechuen, and an "amount which has to be repaid to Shantung for advances made to the government of Kweichow," altogether making up a still larger total.

It is obvious, on the face of it, that these overburdenings, which are to be met by the system of forced contributions from landowners and the more opulent classes, have been mainly produced by the heavy and unwarrantable military and naval expenditure. The works undertaken by Li Hung-shan have plunged the Government into an expense which it will be able to afford. The Chinese are paying for their whistle. It is to be hoped they will soon learn to recognise this fact. We have before pointed out the utter absurdity of their attempting to vie with the Powers of Europe in their armaments, and shown how unindicated is the outlay on armaments and gunboats. They have attempted to make themselves impregnable to attack without first acquiring the means to do so. It would be far wiser to devote all their energies to the development of the material resources of the Empire and thus lay the foundation of an immense revenue from which they could afford, if they then wished, to make costly experiments. At the present moment the military expenditure is extremely burdensome to the people, and is productive of no return whatever. Nor can the Chinese Government, after all the money expended, look round with any real satisfaction at the results achieved. The army is to all intents and purposes incompetent as over to face a Western foe; the fleet of gunboats would speedily become the prize of European men-of-war. The only mode in which the Chinese could offer a more effective resistance to an invading force now than during the last war would be behind ramparts. They might have done much more without incurring half the expense. If they had gone calmly to work to have their officers and soldiers thoroughly disciplined and trained, the advantage obtained

would have far outweighed those secured by the large sums squandered upon the armaments and fleet. But China need not be anxious about her defence. Her security lies in the maintenance of peaceful and friendly relations with the great Powers of the West. So long as she is non-aggressive, and is willing to move, though slowly, in the path of Progress, there is little fear of foreign invasion. Her territory is compact and not at present likely to be assailed, and while friendly relations continue between them, Great Britain would not stand by and see her despoiled without cause. It is, consequently, much to be regretted that her rulers and statesmen do not see the folly of initiating the European system of maintaining vast standing armies and immense military establishments. It must also be remembered that China has not the excuse of being surrounded by neighbours against whom it is necessary to be armed—a circumstance which presses so heavily on the minds of European statesmen—nor has she the numerous scattered colonies and distant dependencies like Great Britain. It is said that the Peking Government has withdrawn from that and well-nigh hopeless task of re-conquering Kashgar, and, if true, the determination shows prudence on the part. Such a war could not fail to prove a long and uncertain one, disastrous alike to victor and vanquished. It is to be hoped that it has really been given up. But it would be still more satisfactory to learn that, with regard to military armaments, the Chinese Government had come to see the error of its ways, and resolved to devote the money thus expended to more useful and practical purposes. No country in the world could offer a richer return for capital if applied to the opening up of the rich mines with which it abounds. When will Chinese officials open their eyes to this fact and take advantage of it?

It is now officially settled that Lieutenant-General Sir R. D. Keith-Johnston, Lord North's Commander-in-Chief in India.

On the whole, the Asian tea season has been a fair one, and the prospects in tea countries will be justified in looking for good returns as the result of this season's operations.

We learn that the Right Rev. Bishop Bloor will resume his week-day services at the Cathedral this evening at 8 o'clock. The Bishop will also celebrate the Holy Communion and give an address on the subject of "New Year's Day" at 8 o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Robert Swinburne has in an advanced state of preparation an important work on the Birds of China. It will be uniform with Mr. H. B. Dyer's "Birds of Europe," to which it will form, as it may be termed, a supplement, as species of birds found in both.

The number of vessels belonging to or bound for Hongkong from the United States, reported to the Customs on the 25th inst., was thirty-two, of which twenty-one were wrecked, four abandoned, four foundered, and six missing. The list embraces two ships, two barques, seven brigantines, and six small boats, with a total value, exclusive of cargo, of \$277,000.

An American paper has the following:—Washington correspondent writes to the depths of the Japanese Minister's wife has a little more of exquisite native embroidery about her than of dresses that cannot be duplicated for money. She is, however, the bitter words spoken by the other ladies, but she sees their folly in their looks, and is made just as happy.

The Rangoon police have discovered a very curious plot. The conspirators, mostly Burmese from Mandalay, had arranged to seize the Arsenal and set fire to the large numbers of them now in custody, but there is great excitement in the capital of British Burma. No reason has been assigned for this extraordinary plot, and the police are endeavouring to get to the bottom of the matter. Doubtless attempts will be made to bring in the golden-footed Majesty of Mandalay as an aid and abettor, but it is not possible to say whether the King has anything to do with it.

Major Hamilton, of San Francisco, presented the following communication to the Board of Supervisors there:—"I would respectfully call your attention to the existence and growth of a very serious and dangerous epidemic of smallpox in the city of San Francisco. It is now spreading rapidly, and is causing much suffering and death. I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant, J. H. Hamilton, Major, U.S. Army."

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Wong Fok Yuen, a blacksmith, and Tong Ahing, a mason, were charged by the Chinese authorities with the theft of a large quantity of silver and gold from the Chinese Consulate. They were committed to prison, and the case is now before the Chinese Magistrate's Court.

Chinese Magistrate's Court. 25th December. Before H. G. Thompson, Esq., R.N.

John Robinson, chief officer on board the British ship *Brilliant*, charged H. E. Munro, a seaman on board, with leaving the ship without permission and refusing to go on board again. The prisoner was sent to the house of detention, and the case is now before the Chinese Magistrate's Court.

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